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523

DESP. NO.

February 9, 1960

FROM : Amembassy HELSINKI

TO : THE DEPARTMENT OF STATE, WASHINGTON.

REF : Embtel 419, February 9; Embdes 488 of January 29, 1960.

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SUBJECT: Social Democrats Lose Control of SAK

On February 8, the carefully planned and closely held proposal of the Regular Social Democratic group in SAK to bring in four Social Democratic unions was defeated when the six Skogists on the Executive Committee (erroneously referred to as Executive Council in reftel) of the SAK and the three Communist Committee members combined their votes to kill the move. Thus, the attempt of the eight-vote Social Democratic group of SAK Chairman Reino HEINONEN to achieve labor unity, and simultaneously, to secure its position before the 1961 SAK Congress, was unsuccessful. The maneuver planned by the Heinonen group was admittedly risky, but until the last minute Heinonen apparently felt that Skogist Valdemar LILJESTROM would not vote with the Communist-Skogist group, thus permitting the admission of the four unions.

In two sessions on the same day, the Skogist Vice Chairman, Vihtori RANTANEN, countered the Chairman's merger proposal with a suggestion that the Book Workers Federation, an independent union, be admitted to SAK, but the applications for membership of the three unions now belonging to the Joint Organization of Trade Unions (AYJ) be held over for the SAK Executive Council. It was on this proposal that the Communist/Skogist nine vote majority openly broke with the Social Democrats. Since the four unions had agreed in advance that all applications would have to be considered en bloc, the winning vote on the Skogist proposal in fact prevents the merger. The open cooperation between Skogists and Communists on this issue is the first such to occur in the SAK, although the formal defection last November of the Skogists from the Social Democratic group in the Executive Committee indicated that Communist/Skogist combinations might be expected.

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In sum, the Regular Social Democratic group in the SAK, now in a minority, both as regards total membership and voting strength in the Executive Council, is losing its struggle to prevent Communist domination of the whole Finnish trade union movement. The new alignment of votes in the Executive Committee of SAK has shown categorically that Skogists and Communists are capable of cooperating in the future and that the Regular Social Democratic faction is incapable on its own of preventing this drift.

For the Ambassador:

Harvey F. Nelson, Jr.

Harvey F. Nelson, Jr.
Second Secretary of Embassy

Department please pass: Amembassy STOCKHOLM

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